

Fertiliser ring crippled

96 tonnes of repacked subsidised goods seized



Success in the bag: Enforcement officers from the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs inspecting the fertiliser bags on a lorry during the raid at an illegal factory in Gurun, Kedah yesterday.

GURUN: A syndicate has been convincing padi farmers for years to sell their government-subsidised fertiliser, instead of using it to improve their rice yields.

The syndicate offered RM15 for a 25kg bag, which the farmers bought for RM10.

What the farmers did not realise was that the syndicate then repacked the fertiliser into 50kg bags before reselling them for RM100 a bag.

The syndicate's antics came to an end after enforcers raided the repacking factory in Guar Chempedak, near here.

Over 96 tonnes of subsidised chemical fertiliser were seized and a lorry worth RM150,000 was also confiscated.

It is learned that the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) had been watching the syndicate for about two years and were learning how they were profiting from their operation before launching the raid.

In the Guar Chempedak raid, dubbed *Ops Utara*, at 11am yesterday, the enforcers arrested a 36-year-old man, who is believed to be in charge of the factory, along with four illegal Pakistani workers.

A senior MACC officer, who asked not to be named, said the team earlier raided two other factories and found that they were licensed fertiliser producers.

"This illegal one was originally a plastic processing factory.

"The owner didn't put up any signboard but used the name of the previous factory as a cover," he added.

The others involved in the operation included personnel from the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry and state Immigration Department.

Kedah Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry enforcement director Datuk Iskandar Halim Sulaiman confirmed the raid.

The owner of the factory will be investigated under the Control of Supplies Act 1961 for being in possession of controlled items without the authority of the supply controller.